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Government of Canada approves Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement and launches Advance Payment Program

- Settlement Agreement
- Advance Payment Form

OTTAWA (May 10, 2006) – The Honourable Beverley J. Oda, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women and Minister responsible for Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada, and the Honourable Jim Prentice, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, announced today the approval of a final Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement and the immediate launch of an Advance Payment program.

"The Government is committed to bring a fair and lasting resolution to this chapter of our history and move forward. The discussions led by the Honourable Frank Iacobucci have resulted in a Settlement Agreement to foster reconciliation and healing among all Canadians," said Minister Oda.

Minister Prentice noted that the Settlement Agreement proposes a Common Experience Payment for all eligible former students of Indian Residential Schools, an Independent Assessment Process for claims of sexual or serious physical abuse, as well as measures to support healing, commemorative activities, and the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. "We hope that today's announcement will bring closure to former students and their descendents. The settlement is just and honourable, as will be our ongoing partnership with Aboriginal people," said the Minister.

Minister Oda was pleased to announce the immediate launch of an Advance Payment program for eligible former Indian Residential School students 65 years of age and older when the negotiations were initiated on May 30, 2005. "We have acted to make funds available as soon as possible," stated Minister Oda.

The Government's representative, the Honourable Frank Iacobucci, concluded a Settlement Agreement with legal representatives of former students of Indian Residential Schools, legal representatives of the Churches involved in running those schools, the Assembly of First Nations, and other Aboriginal organizations. The Settlement Agreement must now be presented for approval by the courts in nine Canadian jurisdictions over the coming months.

"I want to take this opportunity to thank all those who were involved in the negotiations for their hard work toward this historic Settlement Agreement. In particular, I want to thank the Honourable Frank Iacobucci, who has very capably fulfilled his mandate throughout these intense and complex negotiations," added Minister Prentice.

Eligible former students may apply for the Advance Payment of $8,000 by completing the application form available on the Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada website at www.irsr-rqpi.gc.ca.

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All times are reflected in Atlantic time
Date Modified: 2006-05-10